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For Immediate Release:
March 16, 2018

Media Advisory

ARIZONA LEADS THE WAY IN CRIMINAL JUSTICE REFORM

Arizona has been a front-runner in criminal justice reform for more than twenty years, leading the nation in efforts to identify and treat, not incarcerate, drug users and those suffering from mental health issues. The 4th edition of *Prisoners in Arizona*, released today, finds that 95% of inmates in Arizona state prisons are violent or repeat offenders and that only 5% (2,097) are first-time non-violent felons. The number of first-time offenders entering prison decreased by 3.3% (226) from 2011 to 2017.

County level intervention programs, such as drug and DUI courts, mental health courts and veteran courts are helping to reduce the number of offenders sent to prison. Significantly, the number of inmates committed for driving under the influence (DUI) violations decreased by 21% between 2011 and 2017.

The report was commissioned by the Arizona Prosecuting Attorneys' Advisory Council (APAAC) to answer the critically important question of who is in Arizona's prisons. APAAC commissioned previous reports in 2010, 2012, and 2014 to analyze data from the Arizona Department of Corrections. The report's purpose is simple—to provide data which enables informed discussion and decisions regarding Arizona's criminal justice system.

The report notes that Arizona's prison population has declined by about 1.1% since its peak in April 2016, a trend that is sharp contrast to an annual uptick in prison population from July 2012 through April 2016. From July 2016 through June 2017, the population declined by an average of 53 people per month.

According to the researchers, 84% of the inmates are repeat offenders (35,325) and 11% are violent first-time offenders (4513). Between 2011 and 2017, violent offenders increased by 579 or 2.1%; repeat violent offenders increased by 1,324 or 14.8%.

The report closely examined Arizona's rate of prisoners who commit new crimes after release by looking at the records of over 400,000 offenders over the period January 1985 through June 2017. The report determines that 36.4% of prisoners return to prison within three years of their release, and that 50.7% recidivate within a 20-year span. According to the authors, the top five predictors of recidivism are: criminal history, including prior commitment history; gang affiliation; most serious current offense; type of release; and age at admission. For example, an inmate with no prior felonies has a 34.3% probability of recidivating within six years, while for an inmate with one prior felony that probability rate increases to 42.3%.

Yavapai County Attorney Sheila Polk, who chairs APAAC, noted the importance of this data for policy makers examining criminal reform. "Understanding who is in our prisons and for what reasons is crucial to crafting good public policy that keep our residents safe. This report tells us that our prisons are filled with repeat and violent offenders. Efforts at reform should concentrate on front-end measures to keep people from entering a life of crime, and reentry efforts to assist those leaving prison to live a crime-free life."

APAAC will host a roundtable discussion regarding the report on March 19, 2018, at 10:00 a.m. in the 8th Floor Conference Room at the Maricopa County Attorney's Office, located at 301 West Jefferson in Phoenix.

The report will be available on March 19, 2018, at: <http://azsentencing.org/>

Figure 30: Prison Population Comparison: Violent or Repeat Offenders

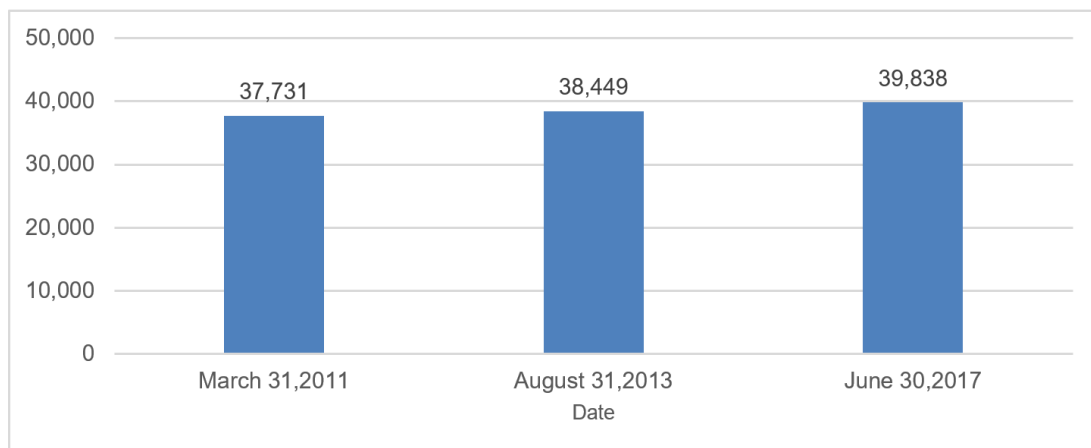


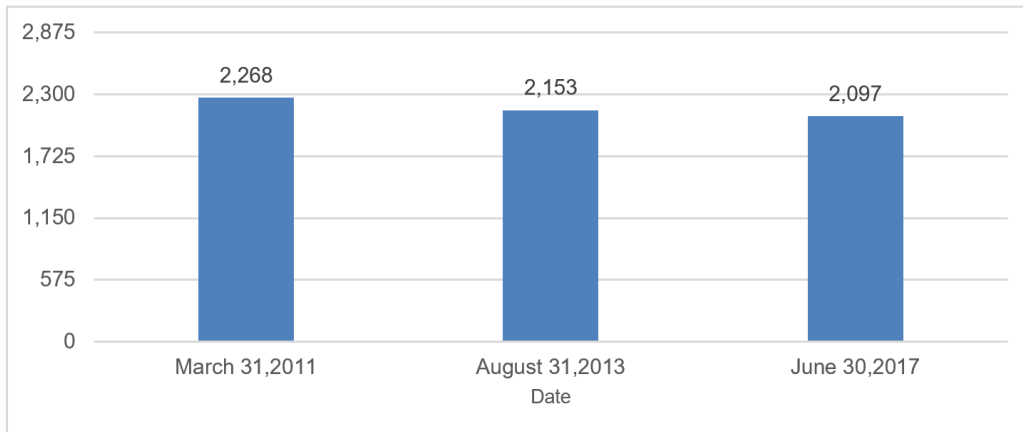
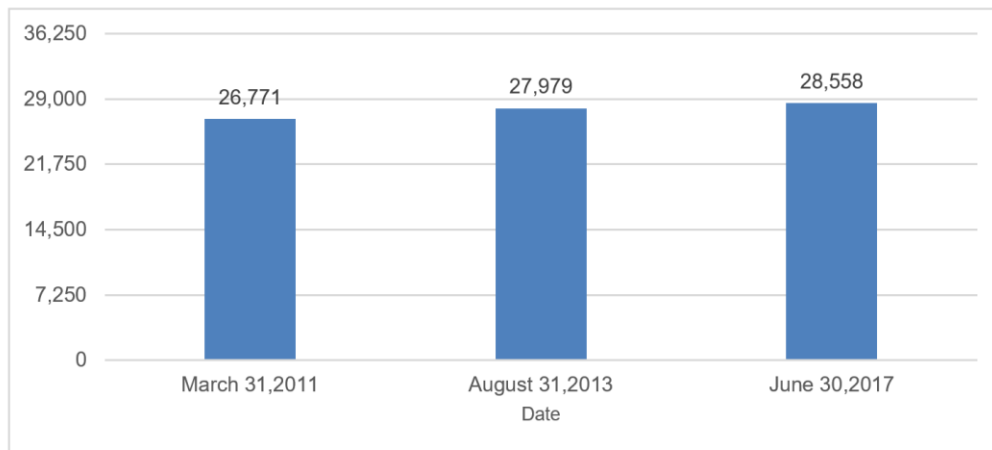
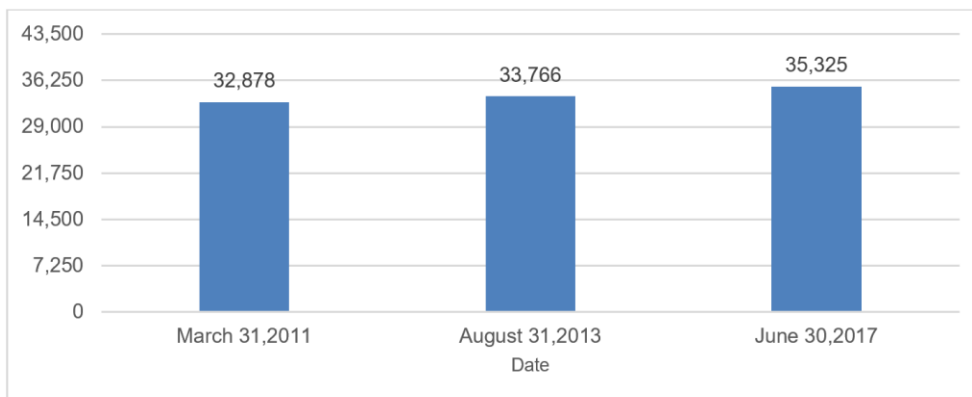
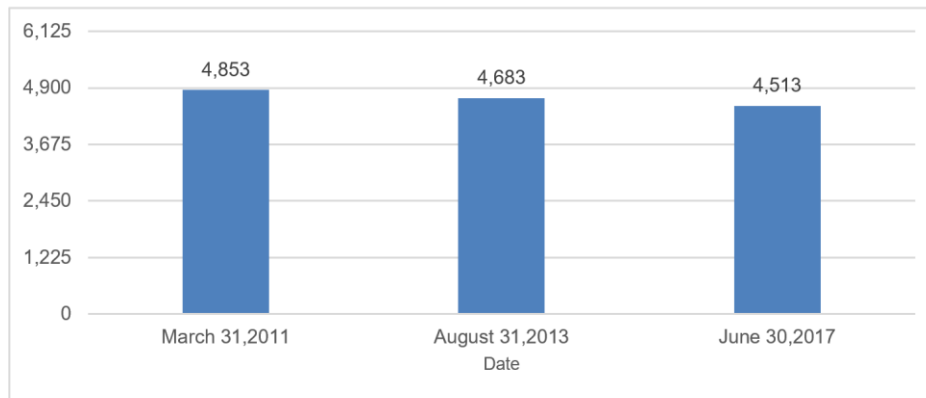
Figure 35: Prison Population Comparison: Non-Violent First Offenders**Figure 26: Prison Population Comparison: Violent Offenders****Figure 28: Prison Population Comparison: Repeat Offenders**

Figure 33: Prison Population Comparison: Violent First Offenders

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